



Aye, (backing camera), and one of her surviving babies with Mrs. Emah-Emah.



Foundation, the primary economic and social activities of Bayside community include fishing, petty trading, commercial sex work, sale of illicit gin, and drug and child trafficking. The HIV pandemic has affected many families in Bayside community resulting in many child-headed or granny-headed households. “Hunger, malnutrition, and abandonment are common experiences with Bayside children and many like the two Aye babies have died”, says Mrs. Emah-Emah.

Although they are everywhere in the community, these children remain mostly invisible and most vulnerable - homeless, street children, or toiling as domestic servants in homes. According to Mrs. Emah-Emah, “many of these children are into prostitution and it is not unusual to find prostitution rings where the leader of the group is a 12-year-old girl-child”.

PEPFAR supports Bayside and twenty-two other communities through its Ambassador’s PEPFAR Small Grants program for OVC to encourage the involvement of communities in reaching out to their vulnerable children, some of which are also HIV positive. PEPFAR also supports more than 723,000 thousand orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) across Nigeria.

With support from PEPFAR, Neighbourhood Care-Well Foundation combs the neighborhoods of Bayside to identify children who are out of school, in child-headed or granny-headed households, in prostitution, or homeless.

The program then provides care to these children including psychosocial support, healthcare, legal protection, education support, and programs that aim to improve the nutritional status of the children.

In addition, PEPFAR supports a “Children Club”, where the children have access to the children’s centre run by Neighbourhood Care-Well Foundation. Children regularly go there for succor as the centre offers children who are suffering and abused the satisfaction of having someone to care for them as they deserve. For children like Aye, this center may well be her only refuge in a harsh world. ❖

Story by Olayinka Balogun

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Truncated Childhood? - Ask Aye

For someone who is barely 17, Aye (not her real name) has been through a lot in her life. Born into abject poverty, her nightmare started at the age of ten, when she was taken to a faraway Onitsha suburb in Anambra State to work as a domestic servant. There, Aye’s employer sexually abused her and another child, who was also a domestic servant in the household. The man soon impregnated the two girls, but he refused to take responsibility. At four different times, the man “loaned” Aye to his relatives as a domestic servant. One of these relatives also sexually abused Aye while she was pregnant.

Poor, stunted, malnourished, and completely without any nurturing, Aye found her way back to Bayside, South Calabar. Aye was thirteen years old when she gave birth to the baby.

Aye soon fell into the hands of other older men in Bayside. She had three babies with two of these men in quick succession. The last two babies died as a result of what is now suspected to be complications from HIV/AIDS, as the father of these babies, and, more recently, Aye have been confirmed to be HIV positive. Described as a philanderer with penchant for children, this man had earlier lost his wife to AIDS-related complications. He has now abandoned his family, including Aye and the four children he had with his late wife. It is now up to Aye, who is also an orphan, and with no real means of livelihood, to care for herself and her two surviving children.

Bayside is one of the slum coastal communities in Calabar South, Cross Rivers State. According to Mrs. Victoria Emah-Emah, Project Director Neighbourhood Care-Well



You Need to Know

HIV Treatment For Children

Nigeria has the highest unmet need for HIV treatment in children world-wide. There are approximately 360,000 children living with HIV in Nigeria, out of which 262,000 are in need of treatment, but only 7% of these children currently receive it. In addition, it is estimated that Nigeria has about 2,193,745 children orphaned by AIDS.

HIV disease in most children progresses rapidly. Without treatment about one third of the infected children will die during their first year and 50% will not witness their second birthday.

Factors militating against reaching more children with HIV treatment can be classified broadly into two: delay in diagnosis and delay in initiation of treatment. The delay in the diagnosis of HIV in children is largely due to the fact that few children are tested for HIV. Children depend on adults for them to access health services including an HIV test. Unfortunately, many of these adults do not even know their own HIV status, are in denial of the existence of the HIV, fear stigma associated with HIV infection, or are ignorant of the fact that children can be infected with HIV. Likewise, missed opportunities abound when health care providers fail to initiate discussion about the need for an HIV test with parents or caregivers when they come with children to access other services.

There is the need to enlighten members of the public about the advantage of demanding HIV testing for themselves and their children. In addition, Government needs to develop policies that will drive the implementation of Provider Initiated Testing and Counseling (PITC) for children. To scale up PITC for children, there is the need to build the capacity of health care providers to initiate HIV testing for children at all service points where services are rendered to children. Prior to PEPFAR's initiation of early infant diagnostic testing in Nigeria, it was difficult to conduct an accurate HIV test for children until they were 15-18 months old, by which time the child may have succumbed to the HIV disease. Therefore, scale up in the provision of early infant diagnosis services in all health facilities is critical. ❖

Story contributed by Dr. Dennis Onotu

LeaderSpeak

(Quotes on PEPFAR)



"The U.S. has been the leading force in funding and scientific expertise in the battle against HIV/AIDS. ...We want the world to know how we appreciate the contribution of the American people" - *Dr. Elly Katabira of Uganda, an Associate Professor of Medicine, President of the International AIDS Society, and Conference Co-Chair of the 2012 International AIDS Conference.*

News & Titbits

The International AIDS Conference (IAC) took place in Washington D. C. from July 22 to July 27, 2012. It was the first IAC to be held in the United States since 1990. For additional information, please visit: <http://www.pepfar.gov/>

History: An HIV Time Line

July/August 2012:

During July and August 2012, Armenia and Fiji lifted travel restrictions for people living with HIV. However, 47 countries, territories and areas continue to maintain a variety of restrictions on the travel and/or stay for people living with HIV.

August 2012:

U.S. Federal Drug Administration approval of Complera, the second all-in-one fixed dose combination tablet, increases treatment options offered to people living with HIV. Thus, patients can take one tablet instead of many tablets per day, and this tablet can be taken at any time of the day and not at the fixed times required for other HIV drugs. This increases the patient's ability to adhere to the strict treatment regime required for HIV.